

Approvals for trials on Bt. Rice

1857. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have allowed Mahyco, a Monsanto group company, to conduct trials of Bt. Rice in 10 locations across seven States during this year.

(b) whether it is also a fact that three of these open field trials would take place in the Basmati growing States of Haryana and U.P. and rice exporters fear that if nearby fields are contaminated by Bt. Rice, trials could sound the death knell for India's Rs. 3,000 crore Basmati exports; and

(c) if so, the precautions Government propose to take to guard the basmati exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir, The Government have given approval to M/s. Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co. Ltd., Mumbai, an Indian company to conduct contained field trials of Bt. Rice at 12 locations located in nine States under the provisions of the Rules for Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells notified under the Environmental Protection Act, 1989.

(b) and (c) All the said field trials of GM rice are contained field trials and no open field trials have been permitted. One of the trials is located in Haryana and two are in U.P. The containment measures comprise of adequate physical and biological safeguards namely isolation distance (as per the National Seed Certification Standards) from the nearest rice field, use of tarpaulin sheet cover and planting non-transgenic rice around the experimental crop which acts as a buffer. As for protecting the Basmati exports, the Central Government have taken a policy decision not to allow development of transgenic Basmati rice.

Private investment in plantation

1858. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided private sector investment in plantation to help restoring degraded forest area and in community land provided sharing of benefits with stakeholders including local community and land owning agency;

(b) if so, whether his Ministry has submitted proposal to the Central Government as the present policy does not allow private investment for plantations in forest land;

(c) whether his Ministry is working on similar proposals allowing private sector in affluent treatment, solid waste management, sewage disposal and eco-tourism; and

(d) if so, by what time final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has mooted a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) framework involving the land owning agency, the sponsor, the forest department, and the local village community for forestation on degraded forest lands, and other lands, as one of the measures to achieve one-third Forest and Tree Cover in the country.

(c) and (d) The Ministry is supporting a scheme on common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) which is also supported by State Government, CETP Associations and financial institutions. The municipal solid waste management projects are funded through the Pollution Control Boards. For operation and maintenance of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs), which is the responsibility of the State Government concerned, States are encouraged to voluntarily adopt public private partnerships in different forms. Ministry of Environment and Forests is also working on an eco-tourism strategy to involve forest dwelling communities in providing eco-tourism services, facilitated by private sector investment.

Chemical sludge discharged by soft drink companies

1859. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH:
SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Pollution Control Board has taken steps to ensure that soft drink companies do not pollute underground water sources;